

# *News from the Wyoming Department of Health*

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## **Keep Swimming Safe and Fun**

While swimming can be a summer highlight for many Wyoming families, a Wyoming Department of Health representative is encouraging simple steps to prevent unwelcome recreational water illnesses (RWIs) from spoiling the fun.

Recreational water illnesses are spread by swallowing, breathing in vapors of, or having contact with contaminated water in swimming pools, water parks, spas, interactive fountains, lakes, rivers or oceans. The most common RWI symptom is diarrhea.

“Water venues can become contaminated in a number of ways, said Kelly Weidenbach, surveillance epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health. “The best way to prevent these illnesses is to keep germs out of the pool in the first place.”

“When people are ill with diarrhea, their stool can contain millions of germs,” Weidenbach explained. “So if someone goes swimming while ill, they can potentially contaminate large pools or waterparks.” Lakes, rivers, hot springs and the ocean can also be contaminated by sewage spills, animal waste and water runoff.

RWIs can be caused by one or more of the following germs: *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia*, *Shigella*, noroviruses, or *E. coli* O157:H7. *Cryptosporidium* (Crypto), which is resistant to normal levels of chlorine disinfectant in swimming pools, has been responsible for several community-wide outbreaks in Wyoming

Since 2006, including last year and so far in 2009, the incidence of Crypto cases reported to the Wyoming Department of Health has been above historical baseline levels. A total of 73 cases were reported statewide in 2007, including a Campbell County outbreak associated with community swimming pools. In 2006, 53 cases of Crypto were reported statewide and the department investigated community-wide, swimming-pool associated outbreaks in Campbell and Crook counties.

Weidenbach said the reason for the increase in Crypto infections is not entirely known and noted one factor may be increased availability of specialized laboratory tests for Crypto that help healthcare providers accurately diagnose the illness. “However, we believe we are seeing a true increase in the number of people who are becoming infected with Crypto, both statewide and nationally,” she said.

*Cryptosporidium* continues to be a common cause of outbreaks of diarrheal illness associated with swimming pools and waterparks all over the United States. “By not swimming while you are ill with diarrhea and by showering before entering the pool, you can help prevent illness and outbreaks,” Weidenbach said. “It’s that simple.”

Weidenbach suggested six healthy swimming steps to follow:

- Don't swim with diarrhea.
- Don't swallow pool water.
- Practice good hygiene. Shower with soap before swimming and wash hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Take kids on bathroom breaks or check diapers often.
- Change diapers in a bathroom or a diaper-changing area and not at poolside.
- Wash children thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before they swim.

Persons who believe they have developed a water-related illness, should contact the Wyoming Department of Health at 1-877-996-9000. It's also recommended to seek immediate medical attention if diarrhea is bloody, if diarrhea does not resolve in three days, if diarrhea is accompanied by fever or chills or if dehydrated. Signs of dehydration include: dry or "cottony" mouth, cracked lips, dry flushed skin, headache, irritability, not urinating at least four times a day, no tears when crying, no sweating or confusion.

For more information about healthy swimming, visit [www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming) online.

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